



MCREA

Montgomery County Retired
Employees' Association, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

November 2020

**MCREA Held Its
First Virtual Annual Meeting on *Zoom*
October 13, 2020, 3:00 P.M. EDST
Meeting Summary Below**

OUR APPRECIATION

A HUGE THANK YOU goes to MCREA Board Member Margaret Knill for making MCREA's first virtual Annual Meeting successful! Margaret took the virtual challenge, especially by creating multiple trial tests with the MCREA Board and other members. She spent much time and energy managing and coordinating this new technology for all. She was/is the right person at the right time! MCREA members are extremely fortunate for her talent and goodwill!

Another HUGE thank you to Linda Herman, Executive Director, Employee Retirement Plans, and her staff member Darrin Arbaugh for their knowledge of *Zoom*, encouragement and technical support as we prepared for and held our first virtual annual meeting.

Again, we thank you! 😊

MCREA'S FIRST VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

MCREA President's Report – Sara Harris

Much energy, effort, and learning enabled MCREA to conduct its Annual Meeting on *Zoom*. The meeting on October 13, 2020 at 3:00, was called to order by MCREA President Sara Harris. She welcomed all 185 attendees, 5 of whom participated by phone.

Sara thanked Linda Herman (Employee Retirement Plans Executive Director), Darrin Arbaugh (Technical Support) and Board member Margaret Knill for their leadership in launching the virtual Annual Meeting. She also expressed appreciation to the many members who participated and provided excellent feedback on the practice sessions. Sara then announced the names of current Board members and their roles.

Sara outlined the agenda and reviewed the mission of the MCREA described as a vehicle to monitor retiree health benefits and pensions, provide advocacy and a voice for retirees by maintaining communications and meetings with the County Executive and County Council, and government officials and staff as needed, and communicate with retirees on matters of interest and importance. Members were asked to keep their contact information current, especially email addresses, so that communication is efficient and easy when needed. MCREA will reach out to members when a need to inform retirees of items of concern arises.

MCREA's Annual Business Meeting

MCREA Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was shared with the membership. Sara indicated the organization is solvent and a majority of expenses are related to the newsletter.

MCREA Communications - Suzanne Hudson

Suzanne indicated there are currently 491 Facebook followers and the MCREA website has a new format. Similar information is posted on both sites. The website now has a connection to pay dues via Pay Pal which members are encouraged to use.

MCREA Board Election - Kathy Best, Vice President

Kathy requested the membership affirm the following seven reappointments to new terms that expire in June 2022: Irm Damazo, Michael Dennis, John Hansman, Sara Harris, Suzanne Hudson, Barbara Kloc and Lillian Snyder.

Presidential reappointments for 1-year terms, expiring in June 2021: Michael Faden, Beryl Feinberg and Faye Mixon

MCREA Bylaws Amendments - Barbara Garrard

Barbara indicated the bylaw amendments allow electronic meetings of the membership, including the annual meeting, and Board meetings in addition to or in combination with meetings held in person. Electronic meetings may use widely accepted Internet meeting services, telephone services and/or other reliable available technology that supports the functions needed for the meeting(s).

The above business items were approved unanimously in an earlier meeting by the MCREA Board and at the virtual Annual Meeting by the MCREA's membership.

2020-2021 MCREA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sara Harris – President	Barbara Garrard
Kathy Best – Vice President	Suzanne Hudson
Secretary – Rotation of Members	Barbara Kloc
John Hansman - Treasurer	Margaret Knill
Charles (Chuck) Beard	Fay Mixon*
Irm Damazo	Charles (Chuck) Sherer
Michael Dennis	Deborah Snead
Michael Faden*	Lillian Snyder
Beryl Feinberg*	Rick Sullivan
	*Presidential Appt.

MCERP's Presentation

Linda Herman, Executive Director, Montgomery County Employee Retirement Plans

Linda shared her PowerPoint Presentation via Zoom, now posted on the MCREA website at mcreaonline.com. She made the following points:

As of 6/30/2020:

- The Employees' Retirement System (ERS) was 99% funded, better than 75% of other US pension plans. The ERS had assets of \$4.3 billion and included 3,683 active members and 2,521 members in the Guaranteed Retirement Income Plan (GRIP-cash balance) as well as 6,560 retirees.
- The Retirement Savings Plan (RSP) had 4,402 active and inactive members and assets of \$538 million.
- The Consolidated Retiree Health Benefits Trust (CRHBT - to pay for future retirees' health benefits) had assets of \$1.2 billion and was 30% funded.
- The Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP) had assets of \$468 million with 3,388 active and inactive participants.
- Fidelity remains the recordkeeper for the RSP, GRIP and DCP. To change your investment elections, discuss asset allocation, or change your distribution options you may contact the local onsite representative, **Ron Seegers** at **240 777 8228**, visit any Fidelity Regional office across the U.S., or access Fidelity at fidelityonsite@montgomerycountymd.gov or at <https://nb.fidelity.com/public/nb/MCG/home>.

- Personal financial planning and investment reviews are provided virtually (at this time) to RSP, DCP, and GRIP participants as follows:
 - Cambridge Investment Research: 2-hour sessions. Call 410-557-7300. For RSP and DCP members only.
 - Fidelity Investments: 1-hour sessions: contact information is noted above.
- For more information regarding your personal retirement plan and to download forms (address change, tax withholding, etc.), Go to www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcerp, Click on *Retirees* or call 311 or 240-777-8230 and request the form.
- If you submit an address change form, both your pension and health insurance information will be updated by MCERP.
- MCERP is working with the Social Security Administration to record a Social Security/Medicare seminar that will be posted on the MCERP website. MCERP is expecting to provide virtual seminars in 2021. No dates or details are yet available.

OHR's Presentation

Karen Bass, Health Insurance Team Manager

Karen shared her PowerPoint Presentation via Zoom, now posted on the MCREA website at mcreaonline.com. (Some information that hasn't changed was included in prior newsletters.)

The following points were made:

- For 2021 there will be NO rate increases for MetLife, CareFirst, United Health Care and CVS/SilverScript. Kaiser rates will slightly decrease (2.5% for 30% cost share). Cigna, our Dental PPO, will slightly increase monthly rates depending on the retiree's Cost Share percentage.
- Retirees' current vision plan, EyeMed, does not issue ID cards. It is a discount plan, not insurance. The discounts are not the same as under the previous plan. Call **Member Services** at **1-866-801-1479** to determine **participating doctors/providers**, who, in turn, can call **1-800-521-3605** to determine if they are authorized to provide you with discounted services. Use the Discount Plan number **1018309** to determine if your vision provider accepts the discount rates.
- Hearing Aid (Amplifon) and Lasik discounts are also available through the EyeMed vendor. See contact information on the last page of your most recent newsletter.)
- Retirees' dependents will automatically be dropped from health insurance benefits on their 26th birthday. No advanced notification will be provided. A COBRA notice is sent after the birthday.
- A handicapped or disabled dependent must have a *Certificate of Coverage Needed* prior to their 26th birthday in order to continue health insurance benefits. Contact OHR at MC311 for the necessary forms three months or more in advance of the 26th birthday.

- Karen encouraged retirees to take advantage of potential cost savings on their health and prescription insurance choices. Retirees pay higher premiums for High Option Plans, so that they can have smaller copayments when utilized. For the High Option prescription drug plan the County contributes the same amount per retiree for either High or Standard Plans. Therefore, retirees in the high prescription plan shoulder the full price difference between the two plans.
- Once a retiree turns 65 and Medicare becomes the retiree's primary insurance, he/she will no longer experience any copayments for health care. By age 65 and older, the retiree receives the same health insurance benefits from the Standard option as from the High option. The latter is, of course, more costly.
- Karen provided examples of how retirees can save both in her Power Point Presentation (available at MCREAonline.com) and in this newsletter on pages 4-5, and 8-11 in the section of *News from Office of Human Resources*.

Sara closed the meeting by asking participants to provide feedback via email and whether more frequent meetings would be of interest. Although there are no current vacancies, if anyone is interested in becoming a Board member or being considered for a special project, contact Sara Harris or any Board member.

Following the meeting, a "social time" was available to allow members to connect and chat with others they knew from County service.

Information and Resources

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF DEATH

In the event of the death of a retiree, beneficiary, and/or dependent, the retiree or his/her personal representative or family member should do the following:

Contact Montgomery County Employee Retirement Plans (MCERP) at 240-777-8230*. Once the notification is received, MCERP will stop or adjust the benefit payment as appropriate and will let the Office of Human Resources (OHR) and other agencies know about the death(s). Once notified, OHR will handle health and life insurance benefits as needed.

*See the back page of your most current newsletter for the most current "*Important Contact Information*."

Tax Credits for Seniors

There are a number of State and County tax credit programs for homeowners and renters. Go to montgomerycountymd.gov/finance/senior.html. This includes the program below.

County Property Tax Credit for Residents Age 65 and over and Retired Military Service Members and their Surviving Spouses.

The County Council passed Bill 42-16 in March 2017 which provides property tax credits for residents age 65 and older who either:

- have owned and lived in the same house for at least 40 consecutive years, with a property assessment of \$650,000 or less, or
- are retired from one of the United States' Armed Forces (Military Retiree) with a property assessment of \$500,000 or less.

In 2019, the discount was extended to the surviving spouse of a retired member of the uniformed services, provided the spouse is 65 years of age and has not remarried.

For details, restrictions and the *Application*, due by *April 1, 2021* go to <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/finance/bill-42-16.html>. This information is current as of the date of this newsletter.

Senior Call Check Program for those 65 and older

Maryland has started a free, opt-in, telephone service to check on older residents.

How Does It Work?

Every day you will receive a telephone call at a regularly scheduled time. Calls will be between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. as close as possible to the one-hour time block you pre-select. If you do not answer by the third attempt, calls will be made to notify a person you selected during program enrollment (e.g. an adult child, a neighbor). This person will be asked to check on you. The program will notify your local non-emergency service after multiple attempts to reach you and your alternate.

Who Can Participate?

Any Maryland resident who is 65 years of age or older who has a landline phone or cell phone (TTY is available). You and your alternate should not have automated call blocking technology (or it should be disabled for this program).

For More Information and How to Apply

To apply, go to: <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/senior-call-check.aspx> or call toll-free (866)-502-0560 and ask to have an application mailed to you.

When Do Calls Begin?

Daily calls will not begin until you receive a call to verify your information and a successful test call to you and your alternate, where applicable, is conducted. After all information is validated, a Welcome Packet will be mailed to your home address including a letter with your start date.

If you do not live in Maryland, check for a similar service offered by your local or state senior services agency.

NEWS from

MONTGOMERY COUNTY EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT PLANS (MCERP)

Social Security/Medicare Seminars

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has suspended all in person seminars due to COVID-19. MCERP is working with SSA to record a seminar which will be posted on the MCERP website. In addition, MCERP hopes to provide virtual seminars in 2021 with a SSA representative who will share information on Social Security, Medicare and the SSA website with employees and retirees and be available to answer questions.

More information will be mailed in the future by the County.

NEWS from

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES (OHR)

Remember: Retirees and Beneficiaries May Change Their Health Insurance Benefits at Any Time During the Year.

Please note the following:

To change your health plan(s) at any time, all that is needed is a completed group insurance enrollment form. The form can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/yxvedax4>. (Note that this is a shortened version of a very long link.) You can also call MC311 to request one be mailed to you. Forms received by the 10th of the month will be effective the 1st of the following month.

2021 Health Insurance Rate Changes

For calendar year 2021 the County is announcing that there will be no rate changes for any of the CareFirst, United HealthCare, or CVS/SilverScript plans. There will be slight increases for dental. See examples below. Keep in mind that cost shares can vary and for illustrative purposes the 30% cost share is being used.

CIGNA Dental PPO (30% Cost Share)	Monthly Increase
Self	\$1.09
Self + 1	\$2.42
Self + Family	\$3.49

For Kaiser participants there will be a slight decrease in rates.

Kaiser Non-Medicare Rates (30% Cost Share)	Monthly Savings
Self	\$4.77
Self + 1	\$8.97
Self + Family	\$14.12

Retirees will receive formal notifications of these rate changes in November from the Office of Human Resources.

Did You Know? Comparing the CareFirst BCBS POS Plans

In both County CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Point of Service Plans (POS), 88% of Medicare retirees are enrolled in the **High** Option POS Plan.

The difference between the High Option and Standard Option POS plans are the copayments. You pay higher premium dollars for lower copayments at the time you need service. However, once you are Medicare eligible, Medicare pays first, then the County

plan pays second and there are no copayments left for the retiree to pay. So, if you are Medicare eligible and currently enrolled in the High Option POS, you may want to consider if the Standard Option POS would work better for you from an overall benefits/cost standpoint.

Now, you won't be going out and buying a new Ferrari with your savings. At the 30% cost share level for self only coverage, **a CareFirst Medicare retiree will save \$158.76/year (based on 2020 rates, 30% cost share)**. But savings are savings, right?

Just the Facts: A Close Look at the Indemnity Plan

The County closed enrollment in the Indemnity plan many years ago, not allowing any new enrollments into this plan. Most likely, the providers most retirees use participate in the County's point of service (POS) plans. Below is a chart that demonstrates the monthly and annual savings a retiree could achieve if they were to switch plans and enroll in both the CareFirst POS Standard Option medical plan and the SilverScript Standard Option prescription plan.

	2020 Medicare Self Only 30% Cost Share
CareFirst Indemnity*	\$200.11
CareFirst POS Standard Option Medical Plan	\$94.71
SilverScript Standard Option Prescription Plan	\$75.64
Monthly Savings for Changing out of Indemnity Plan	\$29.76
Annual Savings	\$357.12

*The plan includes prescription drug coverage. A retiree wishing to change from his/her Indemnity plan needs to elect to participate in a prescription drug plan if he/she wishes to have prescription drug coverage.

Prescription Cost Savings Facts

Which Caremark Prescription Plan — the High Option or Standard Option — is best for you? The chart on page 9 above provides an example of a retiree who has “self only” coverage, a 30% cost share, and Medicare coverage utilizing 2020 rates. Depending on your situation, you may want to consider changing plans based on the overall rates and benefits.

Example/Features	SilverScript High Option Prescription Plan	SilverScript Standard Option Prescription Plan
Rate 30% Cost Share/ Medicare/Self	Monthly \$299.69 Yearly: \$3,596.28	Monthly: \$75.64 Yearly: \$907.68 (\$2,688.60 per year <i>less</i> than the High Option Plan)
Copay (Up to a 90-day supply with Maintenance Choice Program; see below)	\$5 Generics \$10 Brand Name	\$10 Generics \$20 Preferred Brand \$35 Non-Preferred Brand Name
Deductible	None	\$50 1x/year per individual or family
Mail Order	Yes	Yes
Maintenance Choice (Fill maintenance medications at a 90-day/3-month supply for the price of one at CVS retail)	Yes	Yes
Drugs	Same	Same

Prescription Copays	How many prescriptions per <u>month</u> to exceed \$2,688.60 savings*
\$10 – Generic	22
\$20 – Preferred Brand	11
\$35 – Non-Preferred Brand	6

*Assumption that only that level of drug is being filled. The reality is that most people have drugs in all categories (generic, preferred brand and non-preferred brand name).

If you have any questions regarding switching one or more of your plans to save money or for any reason, Karen invites you to call OHR via 311. She or her staff will walk you through the possibilities. You can make the switch; if not satisfied, you can always switch back again anytime, even a month later.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION continued and formerly on the last page of the newsletter:

Cigna (Dental): 1-800-244-6224 www.cigna.com
 EyeMed: 1-866-801-1479 or 800-521-3605 www.eyemed.com; the Discount Plan # is 1018309
 Amplifon (Hearing): 1-888-784-6050 www.AmplifonUSA.com
 Prudential Long-Term Care Insurance: 1-800-732-0416 www.Prudential.com
 ACSIA Long Term Care Insurance: 410-455-4680 / 443-275-1764; www.MCG-LTC.com

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

MCREA: 301-929-9339; website: www.MCREAonline.com; emails: MCREAMembership@gmail.com or PresidentMCREA@gmail.com
Facebook: Montgomery County Retired Employees' Association, Inc.
Montgomery County Government MC311: 240-777-0311 or just 311 (local)
For Montgomery County Employee Retirement Plans: 240-777-8230;
Fax: 301-279-1424; website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcerp
Fidelity (Deferred Compensation Plan): 1-800-343-0860 or 240-777-8228
Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance (Mass Mutual): 1-800-528-9009
For Group/Health Insurance: 240-773-6471 (OHR at MC311); also visit www.mc311.com or www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HIret
CareFirst Blue Cross-Blue Shield: Member Services: 1-888-417-8385 www.Carefirst.com
Kaiser Permanente: Washington Area: 301-468-6000; Baltimore Area: 1-800-777-7902
<https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org>
United Healthcare: Member Services: 1-800-638-0014 www.myuhc.com
Caremark: 1-866-240-4926 www.caremark.com
SilverScript 1-866-249-6167 www.mcg.silverscript.com
See page 11 for more contact information

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MCREA

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